Statement for the Record of
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On

Reviewing the State Department's Annual Report on Terrorism

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International Terrorism and Nonproliferation

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Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee.

Consistent with its statutory mission to serve as the U.S. Government's knowledge bank on international terrorism, the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) provided statistical support to the Department of State's Country Reports on Terrorism. To promote transparency and assist academics, policy makers and the public in understanding the data, NCTC has posted on its website, www.nctc.gov , a detailed discussion of the methodology and counting rules used to develop the statistics, a summary of key observations, a selection of supporting charts and graphs, and the incident descriptions associated with all high fatality attacks in which 10 or more people were killed.

Section 2656f(b) of Title 22 of the U.S. Code requires the State Department to include in its annual report on terrorism "to the extent practicable, complete statistical information on the number of individuals, including United States citizens and dual nationals, killed, injured, or kidnapped by each terrorist group during the preceding calendar year." While NCTC keeps statistics on the annual number of incidents of "terrorism," our ability to track the specific groups responsible for each incident involving killings, kidnappings, and injuries is significantly limited by the availability of reliable open source information, particularly for events involving small numbers of casualties. The statistical material compiled in support of Country Reports, therefore, is drawn from the number of incidents of "terrorism" that occurred in 2005, which is the closest figure that is practicable for NCTC to supply in satisfaction of the above-referenced statistical requirements. In deriving its figures for incidents of terrorism, NCTC applies the definition of "terrorism" that appears in the 22 U.S.C. § 2656f(d)(2), i.e., "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents."

The figures in this year's edition of Country Reports are not directly comparable to statistics reported in pre-2005 editions of *Patterns of Global Terrorism*, or to the figures NCTC reported in April 2005. Those figures were compiled on the basis of a more limited methodology tied to the definition of "international terrorism," which is also contained in 22 U.S.C. § 2656f (see box below).   Subject to changes in statutory reporting requirements, NCTC anticipates that future statistics provided by NCTC will (like this year's report) be tied to the broader definition of "terrorism."

"International terrorism"	"involving citizens or territory of more than one country"	Comment: previously applied definition that resulted in hundreds of incidents per year. While useful in an era of state sponsored terrorist attacks, it does not accurately capture today's threat when the perpetrator and victim are often from the same country.
"Terrorism"	"premeditated politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets"	Comment: definition used for Country Reports 2005. A much broader definition in the statute that includes attacks in which perpetrator and victim are from the same country. Avoids the problems of the "international terrorism" definition and increases the count of incidents by many thousands per year.

NCTC cautions against placing too much weight on any set of incident data alone to gauge success or failure against the forces of terrorism. If NCTC appears before this committee next year and the 2006 incident totals are higher than 2005, it will not mean we are losing the war against terrorism. Similarly if the 2006 incident totals are lower than 2005, it will not mean we are winning. For the following reasons, NCTC does not believe that a simple comparison of the total number of incidents from year to year provides a meaningful measure:

- Terrorism is a tactic, used on many fronts, by diverse perpetrators in different circumstances and with different aims. Simply adding the total number of attacks by various groups from different regions has limited meaning.

- Approximately one half of the 2005 incidents in the NCTC database involve no loss of life. An attack that damages a pipeline and a car bomb attack that kills 100 civilians may each count as one incident in the database. Thus, an incident count alone does not provide a complete picture.

- Counting protocols inevitably require judgment calls that may have an impact on results. Events identified as simultaneous and coordinated, for example, would be recorded as one incident, as would attacks that subsequently targeted first-responders. For instance, on the morning of August 17, 2005, there were approximately 450-500 small bomb attacks in Bangladesh. Because they were coordinated, NCTC counted them as a single incident; an argument could be made that the attacks represented 450 separate attacks.

- The nature of this exercise necessarily involves incomplete and ambiguous information, particularly as it is dependent on open source reporting. The quality, accuracy, and volume of such reporting vary significantly from country to country. Thus, determining whether an incident is politically motivated can be difficult and highly subjective, particularly if the incident does not involve mass casualties.

- As additional information sources are found, and as more information becomes available, particularly from remote parts of the globe (as was the case with Nepal in 2005), NCTC will continue to enrich the database, revising and updating the tabulation of incidents as necessary. As a result, the complete data set cannot be meaningfully compared to previous years, as the improved

data gives the appearance that attacks on civilians may have been occurring at a substantially higher rate than was reflected in previous years' reporting and accounting.

Despite these limitations, tracking incidents of terrorism can help us understand some important trends, including the geographic distribution of incidents and information about the perpetrators and their victims. Year-to-year changes in the gross number of incidents across the globe, however, may tell us little about the international community's effectiveness in preventing these incidents, and thus reducing the capacity of terrorists to advance their agenda through violence against the innocent.

METHODOLOGY

The data provided on the NCTC website, an extract of which is included in Country Reports, is based on the statutory definition set forth above. Accordingly, the incidents NCTC has catalogued in the database are those which, based on available open source information, meet the criteria for "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents."   Determination of what constitutes an incident of terrorism, however, is sometimes based on incomplete information and may be open to interpretation. The perpetrator's specific motivation, whether political or otherwise, is not always clear, nor is the perpetrator's identity always evident. Moreover, additional information may become available over time, affecting the accuracy of initial judgments about incidents.

To establish the repository for the U.S. Government's database on terrorist incidents, in 2005 NCTC unveiled the Worldwide Incidents Tracking System (WITS). Available on the Internet at www.nctc.gov, WITS allows public access to and a transparent look at the NCTC data. A search engine and a wide array of data fields allow the user flexibility in conducting research. Substantial enhancements to the search engine and a reports generating feature will be fielded over the coming year.

To further the goal of transparency, during the course of 2005 NCTC invited academic, commercial, and research organizations to brainstorm and consult on the methodology used to compile terrorism incidents. NCTC will continue to work with subject matter experts to review counting protocols and to ensure its data remains meaningful and relevant. NCTC will ensure that data posted to the website is updated as often as necessary. Thus, the NCTC website must be viewed as a living document, regularly incorporating information about prior incidents as well as current events. As information on specific incidents is revealed through court cases or criminal investigations, for example, NCTC reviews its files and updates the relevant incident data.   NCTC is investigating the feasibility of enabling recognized subject matter experts, academicians, think tanks, and others to provide constructive feedback and substantive concerns directly to NCTC.

Users of the WITS database should recognize that expert opinions may differ on whether a particular incident constitutes terrorism or some other form of political violence. The box below provides a few examples of attacks in 2005 that were judged NOT to be terrorism. These particular examples were relatively easy to distinguish; often the available facts present no clear basis upon which to determine motivation, and NCTC analysts are left to make judgments on the basis of very little information.

REPRESENTATIVE 2005 EVENTS JUDGED NOT TERRORISM
- 1 March: Unknown attackers threw a grenade at an ice cream parlor, seriously wounding one patron. Not terrorism; judged to be Russian organized crime and lacking political motivation.
- 5 March: In Lebanon, pro Syrian and Christian groups exchanged insults; shots fired wounding one civilian. Not terrorism, lacking premeditation.
- 12 May: In Egypt a resident threw a gas bottle out of a window, and the bottle exploded in front of a Mosque. 18 people were killed. Not Terrorism; investigation determined it was an accident.
- 6 July: In China, a bomber threw an IED down a stairwell in a shopping center, wounding 47 civilians. Not Terrorism; investigation indicated that the motivation was crime directed at a former business partner.
- 14 July: In Baghdad, police prevented a suicide bomber wearing an IED and disguised as a police officer from attacking the Interior Minister. Not terrorism – near miss; attack not completed.
- 31 August: Crowd of pilgrims moving over a Tigris river bridge was panicked by rumors of a suicide bomber. In the panic, 1000 civilians were killed. Not terrorism; no evidence of actual planned attack.
- 22 September: Qassam rockets displayed in a HAMAS parade accidentally exploded killing 19, injuring 80. Not terrorism, judged to be accidental.
- 17 November: 2 men accidentally detonated an IED they had been building in their home in Sri Lanka, wounding themselves and 8 others. Not terrorism – near miss; attack not completed.

NCTC has made every effort to limit the degree of subjectivity involved in the judgments, and, in the interests of transparency, has adopted a set of counting rules that are delineated below.

Terrorists must have initiated and executed the attack for it to be included in the database; as noted above, foiled attacks, as well as hoaxes, are not included. Spontaneous hate crimes without intent to cause mass casualties were excluded to the greatest extent practicable.

What is a "noncombatant"?

Under the statutory definition of *terrorism* NCTC uses to compile its database, the victim must be a "noncombatant." However, that term is left open to interpretation by the statute. For the purposes of the WITS database, the term "combatant" was interpreted to mean military, paramilitary, militia, and police under military command and control, in specific areas or regions where war zones or war-like settings exist. Further distinctions were drawn depending on the particular country involved and the role played by the military. Noncombatants therefore included civilians and civilian police and military assets outside of war zones and war-like settings. Diplomatic assets, including personnel, embassies, consulates, and other facilities, were also considered noncombatant targets.

Although only acts of violence against noncombatant targets were counted as terrorism incidents for purposes of the WITS database, if those incidents also resulted in the death of combatant victims, all victims (combatant and noncombatant) were tallied.   In an incident where combatants were the target of the event, non-combatants who were incidentally harmed were designated "collateral" and the incident excluded from the posted data set. For example, if terrorists attacked a military base in Iraq and wounded one civilian bystander, that victim would be deemed collateral, and the incident would not be counted. However, if the attack, even if it appeared to be directed against a combatant target, demonstrated a wanton disregard for civilians in the immediate vicinity, it is included in the data.

In the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan, it is particularly difficult to gather comprehensive information about all incidents and to distinguish terrorism from the numerous other forms of violence, including crime and sectarian violence, in light of imperfect information. The distinction between terrorism and

insurgency in Iraq is especially challenging, as Iraqis participate in the Abu Musab al-Zarqawi terrorist network as well as in tribal and sectarian violence. Therefore, some combatants may be included as victims in some incidents when their presence was incidental to an attack intended for noncombatants. We note, however, that because of the difficulty in gathering data on Iraq and Afghanistan, the dataset does not provide a comprehensive account of all incidents of terrorism in these two countries.

What is "politically motivated violence?"

The statutory definition also requires the attack to be "politically motivated." NCTC has adopted a series of counting rules to assist in the data compilation. Any life threatening attack or kidnapping by any "Foreign Terrorist Organization" or group appearing on the list of "Other Organizations of Concern" is deemed politically motivated. Similarly, any serious attack by any organization or individual against a Government/Diplomatic official or a Government/Diplomatic building is deemed politically motivated and is therefore considered terrorism. On the other hand, any attack that is primarily criminal or economic in nature or is an instance of mob violence is considered not to be "politically motivated." Similarly, any terrorist organization actions that are primarily intended to enable future terrorist attacks (robbing a bank or selling narcotics for the purpose of raising money, for example) are not considered terrorism.

In between these relatively clear-cut cases, there is a degree of subjectivity. In general, NCTC counting rules consider that attacks by unknown perpetrators against either unknown victims or infrastructure are not demonstrably political and therefore are not terrorism. However, there are exceptions to this general rule: if such an attack occurs in areas in which there is significant insurgency, unrest, or political instability, the attack may be considered terrorism; or if the attack occurs in a region free of such political violence, but involves something more than a shooting (for instance, improvised explosive device, beheading, etc.), the attack may, depending on the circumstances, be considered terrorism. Finally, if low-level attacks against noncombatant targets begin to suggest the existence of a chronic problem, the attacks may be considered terrorism.

Perhaps the most difficult distinctions to draw exist in Africa. Beyond the difficulties associated with the incomplete information, the existence of various forms of ethnic and tribal violence in many areas relatively ungoverned by central State control make determinations of terrorism particularly problematic. Tribal groups in unstable areas, many of which are formed around indigenous ethnicities, often act as governing bodies in the absence of effective central government control. For the purposes of counting terrorist incidents, NCTC distinguishes two general cases: when such groups come into direct conflict with one another, the violence is close to war-like circumstances and is not considered terrorism; on the other hand, when these groups recklessly endanger or target local populations (i.e., raiding villages and methodically killing civilians), the attacks are considered terrorism. NCTC envisions working with appropriate experts to further refine the approach to this difficult problem.

KEY NCTC OBSERVATIONS FROM THE 2005 DATA

The bottom line statistics regarding 2005 are as follows: over 11,000 terrorist incidents occurred, 14,500 noncombatants were killed (56 individuals were Americans according to Department of State information), 25,000 noncombatants were wounded, and 35,000 noncombatants were kidnapped.

There are 3 principal reasons for the numbers being significantly higher than in past years:

- The previously used statutory definition of "international terrorism" ("involving citizens or territory of more than one country") resulted in hundreds of incidents per year; the currently used statutory definition of "terrorism" ("premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets") results in many thousands of incidents per year.
- The "international terrorism" definition was originally used to compile 2004 statistics, but it gave rise to results that we considered to be underinclusive (the Van Gogh assassination, Philippine Superferry and one of two Russian aircraft downed in 2004 didn't meet the "international terrorism" definition). Accordingly NCTC retroactively applied the broader "terrorism" definition to the 2004 data as a proof of concept; this was a quick review in which all of 2004 was catalogued in May/June of 2005. While NCTC is confident that the application of the broader "terrorism" definition captured the high fatality incidents for 2004, we undoubtedly did not catalogue thousands of incidents in which few or no individuals were killed. The level of effort difference between the two years means that 2005 is a far more comprehensive data set than that for 2004; as such it limits our ability to do 2004/2005 comparisons to only the higher fatality incident counts (see below).
- The level of violence directed against civilians in Iraq was substantially higher in 2005 than it was in 2004.

Terrorism remains a tactic used across all regions of the world. However, the Near East and South Asia were particularly hard hit, accounting for almost 75% of the attacks and 80% of the fatalities. Over 50% of noncombatant fatalities worldwide were in Iraq.

Of the 40,000 individuals killed or wounded in terrorist attacks in 2005, several unique categories of noncombatants bore a significant brunt of terrorism: 6500 police, 1000 children, 300 government officials, 170 clergy/religious figures and 100 journalists were killed or wounded in 2005. At least 10,000-15,000 Muslims, mostly in Iraq, were the victims of terrorism.

Kidnappings occurred worldwide, but were a particularly acute problem in Nepal where entire school districts of students and teachers were abducted. Of the 35,000 people kidnapped worldwide, almost 95% were abducted in Nepal.

Armed attacks and bombings accounted for the majority of fatalities in 2005. Suicide attacks rose in a number of countries. Approximately 360 suicide bombing events accounted for 20% of all fatalities.

Sunni extremist groups, in particular, continued to morph, merge, change their names, and splinter in 2005. These factors, coupled with false claims, claim denials and a tendency by some governments and local press to report perpetrators generically as "al-Qa'ida" or "jihadists," made it very difficult to systematically attribute attacks to particular Sunni extremist groups:

- Most Sunni extremist attacks appear to have been conducted by various affiliated groups; none in the past year can be definitively determined to have been directed by the al-Qa'ida central leadership.
- When we did get data on actual perpetrator organizations and individuals carrying out attacks, the individuals themselves were often unknown to the counterterrorism community, and some had been radicalized in a relatively short time.
- The "homegrown" variety of attacks, such as the 7 July bus and subway attacks in London that drew on UK citizens as suicide bombers, was of particular concern.

Due to differences in the comprehensiveness of the data sets as described above, a comparison of 2004 and 2005 data is limited to a focus on high fatality incidents (those attacks in which 10 or more people were killed):

- In Iraq, the number of high fatality incidents increased from approximately 65 in 2004 to about 150 in 2005. Similarly the number of fatalities associated with those attacks grew from about 1700 in 2004 to approximately 3400 in 2005.
- In the rest of the world the number of high fatality attacks held constant at about 70 in both 2004 and 2005. The total number of associated fatalities declined from about 3000 in 2004 to about 1500 in 2005. This was due to the fact that many of the attacks in 2004 (such as Madrid, Beslan, the Russian Aeroflot downings, and the Superferry) tended to have higher casualty counts than did the attacks in 2005 (such as the bombings associated with the Hariri assassination, the London subway, Sharm al-Shaykh, Amman and Bali). In general, however, extreme care must be exercised when focusing only on the number of attacks and/or casualty figures; the Sunni extremist attacks of 2005 were as significant as those of 2004 both in terms of demonstrating the desire and capacity to conduct mass casualty attacks and in terms of geopolitical impact. Moreover, NCTC cautions against drawing any conclusions on the basis of only 2 years' data.

What is not in the 2005 data: despite the clear intention of al-Qa'ida leadership, there were no attacks against the United States homeland or attacks utilizing chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear weapons.

Mr. Chairman. This concludes my statement. I look forward to your questions.